

## Non-Exhaustive List of Covid-19 Conspiracy questions:

### 1. Was Covid-19 created in a lab and malevolently released?

- A. The WHO and China say not. Of course, they might have an interest in covering that up if it was true, but I doubt there would be any way to prove that it actually was. And it is certainly possible that this virus was simply a wild mutation of a wild virus.

Scientists could modify any virus in a lab in the same way it could be modified in nature. Saying that a virus could have mutated to its current form in the wild can't prove that it wasn't modified in a lab. In that case, the only way to prove it was created in a lab would be to have inside information.

At the same time, it is conceivable that a virus could be modified in a lab a way that it *could not* have been modified in nature. But it doesn't seem at this time that there is sufficient evidence that this is the case with Covid-19. Here is a link that takes an even-handed look at this discussion: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/coronavirusfrontlines/2020/06/19/did-covid-19-come-from-a-lab-was-it-deliberate-bioterrorism-a-biodefense-expert-explores-the-clues/?sh=3ea34c48356d>

- B. Even if it was lab created, it seems obvious that the Chinese government was not responsible for releasing it. As a weapon, they wouldn't have released it on their own citizens, and every indication is that they have tried extremely hard to eradicate it.
- C. Furthermore, if it was specifically engineered to harm people, someone didn't do a very good job. You would think they would have tried to make something a little more lethal if that was their interest. Covid-19 has a very low death rate (at least in its present common form). That would lead us to believe that if the virus was created as part of lab experimentation, it probably escaped by accident rather than by design.
- D. Therefore, ideas that Covid-19 was released as an act of bioterrorism are unlikely.

### 2. Are some people using Covid-19 to get wealthy? Absolutely. It's human nature to see an opportunity and rush to fill it. Bill Gates might even be smart enough to know it was a matter of time until a pandemic hit, and he might as well get a system in place to profit off of it. People have been saying for years that a pandemic would hit.

### 3. Are some governments using Covid-19 to seize control? Of course, governments always have a tendency to go this direction. The Roman Republic gave way to the Roman Emperor. The Weimar Republic gave way to the rise of the Third Reich. American democracy is gradually giving way to socialism. That's how things go. There are always people looking to seize power, and there are always circumstances popping up that make it possible. But the only agent that could have had a predetermined plan for Covid-19 is God.

4. **Is the danger of Covid-19 exaggerated?** Human nature tends to exaggerate things. I tend to do this in “storytelling” myself, although I work against it. However, most people really are interested in actual statistics. Scientific analysis is intended to eliminate exaggerations. Researchers really want to know what the actual death rate of Covid-19 is. The difference between “Anabaptists” and a broad percentage of the general population is risk tolerance and social values. Anabaptists would rather tolerate a few deaths and keep their social and religious worlds moving forward. Many people in society at large would not. Because of their religious and cultural views, Anabaptists tend to accept higher levels of risk in many areas than the general population. We may think that our ways and views are more reasonable or reflect better priorities, but we need to have empathy and respect for those who feel differently.

Higher education, urban life, and suburban life tend to make people more risk averse. There is a red-necked race of people living in the boondocks who are not Anabaptists or even very religious, and yet are fairly risk tolerant, but these people aren’t influencing public policy very much.

Covid-19 arrived at an extremely polarized moment in American politics, and this probably contributed to the hype.

As modern life has given mankind more and more control over his environment, he feels an increased need to be in control. This spills over into safety issues. We are all glad for safety. However, people who have an eternal perspective and expect to spend eternity with Jesus after a little blip of time (called lifespan) is past should be less concerned about their personal comfort and security during this little blip of time than those who have no eternal perspective. However, we can’t blame them for a perspective that comes from a different paradigm.

The other thing that has happened to modern society is “liability”. In an honor-based society, you accept some pain, you put your life on the line, and you accept that it’s not all about you. In our litigious culture everyone has to make every attempt possible to mitigate risk or they will be blamed for unpopular outcomes.

5. **Are masks beneficial?** The science is clear that correctly masking slows the spread of Covid-19, and may lessen its severity. Once again, the larger question is whether one’s level of risk tolerance would prefer the inconvenience and society altering dimensions of masking or not. Of course, many people have bought into narratives that masks are worthless. But we need to understand that this belief does not come from people who are unbiased. Certainly, it can be argued that masking mandates are a threat to individual freedoms, and the government should not make them. But it should be admitted that this is a question of which values are more important—not a denial that masks are somewhat effective. It is hard to see how these mandates are much different *in principle* from a seatbelt or car seat law. (I don’t think God appointed governments to micromanage these details. At the same time, I believe that we are to submit to governments.)

## 6. Will Covid-19 vaccination lead to the mark of the beast?

- A. Even if a person believes that Revelation 13 describes a literal mark placed on people that is connected to the number 666 and determines the fate of one's soul, he should be aware that many good Christians through history have not held this view.
- B. We should know God well enough to know that He won't put people in hell for being uninformed and having something slipped upon them. If there is a literal mark, which causes damnation for those that receive it, it will be connected in some way with a denial of Christ.
- C. It is difficult to see a moral difference between having a microchip in a card in one's wallet (containing X information) and having a microchip in one's hand with the same information. If simply having a machine implanted in the hand is immoral, then pacemakers and dental implants are immoral. That leads one to believe that the Mark of the Beast, if a physical and literal object, is something other than just an identity chip. It would be something that involves allegiance to Satan.
- D. If Covid-19 vaccination is mandatory at some point in the future for international travel, etc., it is hard to see how that is different in principle from other requirements for travel (such as ID and passports).
- E. The current Covid-19 vaccinations have no mechanisms to track or control people. We are most likely headed for a time when governments can track and control everyone in a way that was never possible in the past. It would be unsurprising if this leads to a situation where religious freedoms disappear and everyone is expected to conform to the "great society". Mandatory Covid-19 vaccination and contact tracing may be small steps that lead us down this path, but every invention since the light bulb has led us toward a technologically advanced society, that, in the wrong hands would become a nightmare.
- F. The bottom line is this: Scripture says that "when he shall have accomplished to shatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished". The devil is surrounding the camp of the saints, and we can expect great trouble before the return of the Lord. Covid-19 is one thing among many that is leading to increasing control of individual choices and lifestyles. This will lead to eventual persecution for those of us who are accustomed to freedom. (Some places in the world are already experiencing about as much persecution as could be imagined.) But there is no evidence that Covid-19 vaccination is directly connected to the "mark of the beast", or that refusing it will somehow prevent bad things from happening.

**In fact, the best way to avoid losing religious freedoms related to vaccination** is to base one's vaccination choices on sound science and defensible ethics. Then, whatever governments think about our refusal of certain vaccines, they won't be able to say it is because of ignorance, superstition, or conspiracy theories.

There are many conspiracy theories afoot, and much misinformation. For those of us who are not very scientifically aware, how will we sort through the information? You need to find someone whom you trust, who clearly understands the topics being discussed. Ideally, this would be a person who shares your worldview, but understands why others think as they do. It generally helps to read both sides of a discussion. Even when we lean toward one side, hearing the view of the other usually often gives us more empathy for them, and makes us less cocky about our position.

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